(d) whether the passengers of the trains halting for a short period at a station would not have to face inconvenience with this system?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD): (a) to (d) Privatisation of catering services on Railways were announced in the Railway Budget 1991-92. As per Catering Policy issued on 06.01.1992, Railways decided that in future no catering/vending units should be taken up for departmental management and all the new units both static and mobile should be managed by licensees only. In the Catering Policy 2000 and new Catering Policy 2004, it was reiterated that — "In future no catering/ vending units should be taken up for departmental management and licensees should manage the serivces....". In subsequent catering policies also privatisation of catering services over Indian Railways has been pursued.

In order to upgrade, professionalise and manage the catering and hospitality services at stations, on trains and on other locations, Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) has been formed and entrusted with the task of providing Catering services on Indian Railways at a reasonable price, and to consolidate railway catering services through public-private partnership and also to develop and upgrade the human resource skills by imparting training at all levels and introduce new technology and modern management practices. Price of standard meals, tea/coffee, breakfast and packaged drinking water is fixed by the Railway. Regular inspections on quality of food are undertaken by Railway and IRCTC officials.

More than 90% of the catering units over Indian Railways are small units comprising of trolleys, stalls etc. and small licensees' business have not been affected due to graduation of catering services.

Passengers of trains having halts for short durations can conveniently avail of the facilities of small units along the platforms, both stalls and trolleys.

Suicides by farmers

*65. SHRIMATI HEMA MALINI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether cause of farmers' suicides has been analysed by the Committee appointed by the Prime Minister;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action proposed to sanction special packages to affected families and to others burdened with loans, district-wise?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) At the behest of the Prime Minister, a factfinding team was constituted by Planning Commission to study, *inter-alia,* the issue of rural distress and disparities in regional development in Maharashtra especially with particular emphasis on Vidarbha region. The report of the team has indicated that broadly the following are the causes for perception of acute distress among the farmers:

* Lack of credit availability

* Lack of irrigation facilities

* High cost of production and low yield

* High cost of seeds and their poor quality

* Inadequate marketing support

* Ineffective agricultural extension services.

In pursuance to the instructions of the Prime Minister's Office, another Planning Commission team had also visited Wayanad district of Kerala to study the agrarian crisis. However, no Committee had been appointed by the Prime Minister exclusively to probe the causes of suicide by farmers.

(c) The reports given by the teams were taken into consideration for framing the Rehabilitation Package which was launched by Government of India for .31 suicide prone Districts in the four States of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Kerala. The package is being implemented over a period of 3 years and includes both immediate and medium term measures. It aims at establishing a sustainable and viable farming and livelihood support system through debt relief to farmers, improved supply of institutional credit,crop centric approach to agriculture, assured irrigation facilities, watershed management, better extension and farming support services, improved marketing facilities and subsidiary income opportunities through horticulture, livestock, dairying, fisheries etc. For alleviating the hardship faced by debt stressed families of farmers, ex-gratia assistance from Prime Minister's National Relief Fund is being provided @ Rs. 50

lakh per district. The Package involves a total amount of Rs. 16978.69 crore consisting of Rs. 10579.43 crore as subsidy/grants and Rs. 6399.26 crore as loan. District wise break-up of the package is not maintained at the central level. However, the state wise break-up is as under:

Andhra Pradesh	—	Rs 9650.55 crore
Karnataka	—	Rs. 2689.64 crore
Kerala	—	Rs. 765.24 crore
Maharashtra	—	Rs. 3873.26 crore

Relief package for Vidarbha

*66. SHRI SYED AZEEZ PASHA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that only a paltry sum has been released, so far, out of Rs. 3750 crores special relief package for six districts of Vidarbha announced by the Prime Minister on July 1, last year; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reason for not releasing the package fund as yet?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) The Government of India has sanctioned a rehabilitation package of Rs. 3873.26 crore for six districts of Maharashtra in Vidarbha region. This includes both subsidy/grant and loan component. Various items of assistance covered by this amount are ex-gratia assistance from Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF), interest waiver, assured irrigation, seed replacement, watershed development, micro irrigation, horticulture development, extension services, and subsidiary income services. As per the available information, an amount of about Rs. 1530 crore has already been released for implementation of the package in Maharashtra. Keeping in view the schedule of implementation of the package, the released amount is satisfactory.

Adoption of G.M. crops

†*67. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a state of confusion amongst the farmers of the country regarding adoption of GM. crops;

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.